

A bursary in honour of inspiring classmate

By **LESLIE KAY LIM**

THOUGH stricken with brain lymphoma, Ms Christine Chong Hui Xian persisted with her medical studies, even taking her second-year exam while in hospital.

That was in 2009. She died later that year, at age 21.

Her fortitude so inspired classmate Emmett Wong Tsz Yeung that the 24-year-old, with some classmates at the National University of Singapore's Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, spearheaded a drive to set up a bursary in her name.

They raised \$250,000 and from next year, medical students struggling to make ends meet can apply for a \$5,000 grant from the NUS Medical Society Christine Chong Hui Xian Bursary.

Dr Wong had sat next to Ms Chong in class for two years. He said she had also suffered from lupus from a young age but was always “bubbly and cheerful”.

Even when she could no longer attend classes, she was her usual cheerful self when classmates visited her at home, listening to their experiences in the wards, Dr Wong said.

Her death made him “understand not only how a disease affects a person, but also the



Doctors Ray Lai (left) and Emmett Wong (centre) were among those behind the effort to set up a bursary in memory of Ms Chong. They have now handed over the reins to juniors like Mr Benjamin Tan (right). ST PHOTO: LAU FOOK KONG

family and people around him”.

The money raised will be matched 1½ times by the Government and the endowment fund managed by the NUS Medical Society.

The outpouring of support has surprised Ms Chong's 250 classmates, who graduated about a fortnight ago, said Dr Ray Lai, 24, one of the bursary organisers.

They staged concerts and

screened movies to raise funds, which were bolstered by donations from medical alumni and the Goh Keng Swee and Lee foundations.

The goal is to raise \$500,000,

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said Dr Lai, adding that he is glad his juniors “have taken the reins and are now working on it”.

Among them is fifth-year medical student Benjamin Tan. Said the 23-year-old: “We’re working on, among other things, publishing a book of inspiring stories of doctors in Singapore.”

Eligible students will be selected for the bursary by the dean's office.

Ms Chong's mother, civil servant Low Siew Khoon, considers the bursary a fitting memorial to the youngest of her three children. “She loved to help people... Her dream of becoming a doctor lives on in the many... lives that will be blessed by this bursary.”

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